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Asia Watch

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province fails to function. Hundreds are detained under laws that permit imprisonment without trial.

In May, Stanley Wolpert, a UCLA historian and a South Asia specialist, travelled to North India for Asia Watch for two weeks. He conducted interviews with government officials, human rights representatives and Sikh leaders. Asia Watch expects to issue a report on the Punjab in early 1988.

INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR

In 1987, Asia Watch's major efforts in Indonesia reflected its concerns about government efforts to limit freedom of association through control of social and labor organizations.

In June 1987, the Indonesian Law on Social Organizations, adopted in 1985, came into force. The law empowers the government to suspend and dissolve social organizations, to block foreign assistance to non-governmental organizations, and to require social organizations "having one and the same character" to associate under coordinating bodies. Based on information on the Social Organizations Law provided by Asia Watch in May, Senator Tom Harkin raised a number of concerns respecting freedom of association in a letter to Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, who was visiting Washington. Similarly, in a June letter to Ambassador Soesilo Soedarman, Congressional Friends of Human Rights Monitors, a project of Human Rights Watch, expressed concern about the impact of the Social Organizations Law on the activities of organizations concerned with protecting and

promoting human rights.¹

In 1987, Asia Watch also responded to increased governmental control over the labor movement in Indonesia. In testimony before the United States Special Trade Representative in October, Asia Watch sought elimination of Indonesia as a beneficiary of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) Program, a system of tariff relief for Third World countries seeking to export goods to the U.S. market. An amendment to the Trade Act adopted in 1984 links trade preferences under the GSP with beneficiary governments' compliance with internationally recognized worker rights. In November, Asia Watch presented similar testimony to the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), a U.S. corporation that insures U.S. overseas investments. At this writing, neither the USTR nor OPIC has made a final decision with respect to Indonesia's eligibility for benefits. Asia Watch also worked on freedom of expression in Indonesia and protested the mid-1987 closing of the Jakarta-based business daily, Prioritas, in a letter to President Suharto, and provided information and assistance to other organizations concerned about this issue.

Asia Watch worked closely with a number of Senate offices in an effort to build support for congressional hearings on human rights in Indonesia. As a result, the Senate Subcommittee

¹ The letter also protested the denial of an exit permit to a prominent human rights lawyer, H.J.C. Princen, as well as the suspension of human rights lawyer Buyung Nasution's right to practice for one year. Nasution's suspension was apparently in retaliation for his spirited defense in the political trial of retired General H.R. Dharsono in 1985 and early 1986.

East Asian and Pacific Affairs agreed in principle to hold such hearings in the near future.

Asia Watch Washington Representative Holly Burkhalter discussed Indonesia and East Timor in February testimony on the Reagan Administration's Human Rights Policies before the House Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations, and in April testimony on the Reagan Administration's Foreign Aid Request before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. She raised issues that included denial of access for international humanitarian organizations to Irian Jaya and to Muslim political prisoners in Indonesia proper; executions of long-term political prisoners under conditions that Asia Watch regards as cruel and inhuman; and restrictions in the Social Organizations Law.

In 1987, Asia Watch was successful in maintaining attention to continuing human rights abuses relating to the conflict in East Timor. In testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations in April, Holly Burkhalter urged the Committee to "keep the spotlight on [human rights issues] in East Timor." At Asia Watch's initiative, a bipartisan group of 40 Senators vote to Secretary of State George P. Shultz in July expressing alarm about Indonesian military operations in the territory and calling on the Secretary to urge that the Indonesians allow full access for international humanitarian and human rights organizations. The letter discussed the cases of a number of East Timorese who have been prevented from emigrating.

According to a New York Times report on the letter, "[i]t was unusual for that many senators, led by Dave Durenberger, Republican of Minnesota, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, to express concern for a situation that draws little public attention."

This expression of concern made it clear that in the absence of access for outside organizations and substantial movement on human rights, the East Timor issue would continue to affect U.S. relations with Indonesia and mar Indonesia's international image. This is especially significant in light of President Suharto's desire to assume leadership in the Non-Aligned movement. Foreign Minister Mochtar, in an unusual public reaction described in the Indonesian publication Pembaruan, strongly condemned the Senate letter.

Shortly after the letter was issued, a number of Administration officials visited Capitol Hill to brief the congressional staff members most involved. They attempted to allay congressional concerns, and encouraged a congressional visit to East Timor. If such a mission takes place, Asia Watch will provide briefing material, including a suggested itinerary.

In August, Asia Watch program director Eric Schwartz testified on East Timor before the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization. Asia Watch believes that the Committee's yearly session on East Timor is significant, as it indicates continued international awareness and concern about human rights in the territory. Asia Watch's testimony described

the known human rights abuses and criticized severe restrictions on access.

Finally, Asia Watch continued to express its concern about the fate of Jakarta-based students from East Timor who faced persecution by Indonesian authorities. In May, Asia Watch sought the assistance of members of Congress in an appeal to Secretary Shultz, who was about to meet in Washington with Foreign Minister Mochtar. The appeal concerned four students: two were arrested by authorities in September 1986 and released without explanation on October 11, 1986. Their releases came after Congressional and U.S. Embassy expressions of concern encouraged by Asia Watch. Shortly thereafter, all four of the students sought asylum at the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta. Though the Dutch authorities apparently made efforts to assist the students, they have not yet been granted exit visas to leave. Thirty-two Congressmen wrote to Secretary Shultz requesting that he recommend to Foreign Minister Mochtar that the four students be permitted to leave Indonesia. At last report, the case was still unresolved.

THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA (NORTH KOREA)

In May 1986, the Asia Watch Committee decided to publish jointly with the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee a report on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Research has been undertaken, and the report is now being completed. Research was coordinated in Minnesota by Professor David Weissbrodt.